

Upper Mississippi River

National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Comprehensive Conservation Plan Update

July 2003



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Work Continues on Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Public Involvement, Laws and Policy Contribute to Planning Framework

Work on comprehensive conservation plans, or CCPs, for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge and the proposed Lost Mound National Wildlife Refuge began in August 2002 with an extensive public involvement effort. Between August 2002 and March 2003, we hosted open houses, workshops and meetings that are aimed at both providing information on the planning process and soliciting citizens' ideas on how the Refuges should be managed over the next 15 years.

More information on the background of this planning project is available at <http://www.midwest.fws.gov/planning/uppermissstop.htm>

Our hope is that the planning process will be an opportunity to hear creative ideas from people who care about these Refuges and challenge ourselves to think creatively about how we manage wildlife, habitat and people. We also need to work within certain parameters, including the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the purposes of the Refuges that make up the Complex.

Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. (Source: The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.)

Goals of the Refuge System

- To fulfill our statutory duty to achieve refuge purpose(s) and further the System mission.
- To conserve, restore where appropriate, and enhance all species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are endangered or threatened with becoming endangered.
- To perpetuate migratory bird, interjurisdictional fish, and marine mammal populations.
- To conserve a diversity of fish, wildlife, and plants.
- To conserve and restore where appropriate representative ecosystems of the United States, including the ecological processes characteristic of those ecosystems.
- To foster understanding and instill appreciation of native fish, wildlife, and plants, and their conservation, by providing the public with safe, high-quality, and compatible wildlife-dependent public use. Such use includes hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

Purposes of Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

(a) as a refuge and breeding place for migratory birds ... (b) .. As a refuge and breeding place for other wild birds, game animals, furbearing animals, and for the conservation of wild flowers and aquatic plants, and (c) ... as a refuge and breeding place for fish and other aquatic animal life. 43 Stat. 650, dated June 7, 1924.

Purpose of Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge

".... to conserve (a) fish or wildlife which are listed as endangered species or threatened species ... or (b) plants." 16 U.S.C. 1534 (Endangered Species Act of the 1973).

Purpose of Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge

"..... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife." Executive Order 7437, dated August 21, 1936

Preliminary Vision, Goals and Alternatives for the Upper Miss Refuge

Based on what we have heard in open houses and workshops as well as what we have heard from stakeholders in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois, we have preliminary drafts of the Refuge vision, goals, and the management alternatives that will be examined in an environmental impact statement as part of the planning process.

Draft visions, goals and alternatives for Trempealeau NWR and Driftless Area NWR are still being written.

Draft Refuge Vision

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is *beautiful, healthy*, and supports *abundant and diverse* native fish, wildlife, and plants for the *enjoyment and thoughtful use* of *current and future* generations.

Draft Refuge Goals

Goal 1. Landscape: We will strive to maintain and improve the scenic qualities and wild character of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Goal 2. Ecological Health: We will strive to improve the ecological health of the river by working with others.

Goal 3. Wildlife and Habitat: Refuge habitat will support diverse and abundant native fish, wildlife and plants.

Goal 4. Wildlife-Dependent Public Use: We will manage public use programs and facilities to ensure high quality and sustainable wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities for a broad cross-section of the public.



Goal 5. Other Recreational Use: We will manage non-wildlife dependent recreational uses in a way which protects human health and safety, minimizes impacts to wildlife and the refuge environment, minimizes conflicts with wildlife-dependent uses, and is reasonable and feasible from an administrative and law enforcement standpoint.

Goal 6. Administration and Operations: We will clarify our jurisdiction and have funding, staffing, facilities, equipment, and public awareness and support to carry out the purpose, vision, goals, objectives, and strategies of the Refuge.

Draft Alternatives

The following draft alternatives are being considered in preparation of the CCP and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. As draft alternatives, the actual details are still being developed. However, these alternatives give some idea of the range of options being considered in the planning process.

1. No Action

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires us to evaluate one alternative showing the effects of not altering existing conditions. This is referred to as the “No Action” alternative. For the Refuge, under this alternative we would continue current level of effort on pool plans, pool drawdowns, and Environmental Management Program (EMP) projects. Continue very modest acquisition of lands within approved boundary. No expansion of public use and only modest fine-tuning of current public use policies. Maintain current waterfowl hunting closed areas. Maintain current staff and office/visitor facilities.

2. Protection Alternative

Focus on a “let nature take its course” management philosophy. Land and water management would be custodial in nature. Public use opportunities would remain about the same or decline. Look at closing beaches and other areas to public use. Focus more on law enforcement, and less on biology and the management of consumptive uses such as hunting and fishing.

3. Conservation Alternative

Seek a balanced approach to habitat, wildlife and public use management, with increased emphasis in all areas. Increase capability for biology and public use management. Make pool drawdowns a regular operation. Continue EMP and seek full funding for project construction and operation. Implement land acquisition in approved 1987 Master Plan (36,000 acres). Refine current adaptive management strategies. Provide more public use opportunities overall, but focus on a more balanced approach between all user groups.

4. Multiple-use Alternative

Focus on public use of the refuge, including non-wildlife-dependent uses such as camping, swimming, and boating. Increase harvest of forest and grassland areas in line with wildlife management principles, and look at increasing use of farming to attract wildlife. Seek more liberal regulations for use of the refuge. Eliminate closed areas that are not effective, but do not replace, and in effect increase areas open to hunting. Focus EMP on benefits for hunting and fishing over fish and wildlife objectives.

What's Next for the CCP?

Now that we have received citizen comments, concerns and potential solutions, it is time for Refuge staff and other Service personnel to write a draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental decision documents for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, and Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge in three separate documents. If the proposed Lost Mound National Wildlife Refuge is approved within the next few months, we will write a draft plan and environmental assessment for that unit as well. Our intent is to have these draft documents available for review in the spring of 2004. A public review period will begin once the documents are available, and we will schedule meetings to give everyone interested an opportunity to talk to Refuge staff and planners. Written comments will also be accepted. State agencies and other federal agencies will also be invited to review and comment.

Your comments are welcome anytime during this planning process. Please see the front page of this newsletter for information on the e-mail address, telephone and mailing address.

Workshops Offer Insight and Ideas on Refuge Management

Seven “Manager for a Day” workshops were conducted to obtain potential solutions for issues facing the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. These all day workshops, attended by citizens and agency personnel, occurred as follows:

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge:

- January 4, 2003, Prairie du Chien High School, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin
- January 11, 2003, House of Events, Savanna, Illinois
- March 8, 2003, Winona Middle School, Winona, Minnesota
- March 12, 2003, Cartwright Center, UW – La Crosse, La Crosse, Wisconsin, Interagency Team
- March 22, 2003 Onalaska Middle School, Onalaska, Wisconsin

Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge

- February 20, 2003, Central State Bank, Elkader, Iowa (evening only)

Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge

- March 15, 2003 Trempealeau Middle School, Trempealeau, Wisconsin

How the Workshops Worked

Dr. Onnie Byers and Kathy Holzer, both of Conservation Breeding Specialists Group in Apple Valley, Minnesota, facilitated all but one of the workshops. The Elkader, Iowa, workshop was facilitated by Refuge staff. Each workshop began with a presentation by Refuge Complex Manager Don Hultman on the “sideboards” or legal requirements under which refuges must operate, with detailed reference to the “National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

This presentation was followed by Refuge Planner Eric Nelson, who gave a summary of 12 public meetings held in August and September 2002



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where citizens expressed hundreds of concerns about the future management of the Refuge Complex. These many concerns were then consolidated into 12 issues that “Manager for Day” participants were asked to address. The issues were printed as one-page “Issue Fact Sheets” that provided background materials and several concerns citizens and staff had expressed about each issue. The Issue Fact Sheets are available on the internet at:

<http://www.midwest.fws.gov/planning/uppermissfacts.htm>

The facilitators then began the workshop process by randomly assigning participants to working groups of 6-8 people. The groups each selected 5 of 12 “Fact Sheet” issues that they would address throughout the day. They could add more issues if desired. The exception to this procedure was at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, where participants addressed 11 of 12 “Fact Sheet” issues and added others. Groups selected their top five issues for discussion by having each participant place up to five “sticky dots” next to his or her highest priority issue written on flip charts. Each working group selected its own facilitator, presenter, recorder, and timekeeper. All concerns, notes, and solutions were entered into laptop computers by Refuge staff. At day’s end, an individual from each group gave a short presentation on their concerns and the potential solutions to these issues that their group had identified. Participants were encouraged to listen carefully, know that all opinions were valid, respect each other, not allow one person dominate, and recognize that differences of opinion would be voiced but not necessarily resolved at the workshop.

A Note about the Issues

Workshops held at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, Savanna, Illinois, Winona, Minnesota, Onalaska, Wisconsin, and La Crosse, Wisconsin, all dealt with the same basic 12 issues related to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Workshops at Elkader and Trempealeau each had issues specific to Driftless Area NWR and Trempealeau NWR, respectively.



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Summary of Potential Solutions

Workshop participants generated many pages of issues, concerns, additional discussion notes and potential solutions regarding the future of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. These items appear in their entirety, as recorded at each workshop, on the planning web site (<http://midwest.fws.gov/planning/uppermissstop.htm>). The following provides a range of solutions expressed at the workshops.

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

Issue: Management of Closed Areas

- Expand closed area boundaries.
- Rotate the use of closed areas.
- Increase distribution of quality habitat.
- Expand the use of voluntary avoidance areas.
- Modify boundaries and hunting regs to solve “firing line” issues.
- Reduce boat speeds in closed areas.
- Increase public education on the importance of closed areas.

Issue: Habitat Protection/Enhancement

- Increase reforestation of backwater islands with native hardwoods.
- Continue strong funding for Corps Environmental Management Program.
- Increase public education about habitat values.
- Do not increase depth of navigation channel.
- Obtain local support and funds for projects.
- Create a user fee for river users.
- Educate people to reduce off-river causes of sedimentation.
- Conduct research and use water level management to mimic the natural riverine processes.

Issue: Terrestrial Vegetation Habitat Management

- Need adequate funding for habitat.
- Refuge needs to work with basin and watershed partnerships.
- Implement the Environmental Pool Plans.
- Promote more interagency coordination on regulations, recreational uses and acquisition to protect the Refuge.

Issue: Impacts from Adjacent Lands

- Work more closely with private landowners and conservation groups to address off-refuge land uses that impact the Refuge.
- Purchase land based on habitat needs.
- Educate adjacent landowners.
- Spend more money on conservation programs.
- Write a watershed management plan.
- Match up Corps and Refuge rules.
- Coordinate with adjacent development, e.g., housing, commercial, use “smart growth” policy.

Issue: Invasive Species

- Need tighter federal regulations.
- Increase monitoring and rate of spread.
- Educate the public on impacts of invasives.
- Research and development of control methods are needed.
- Propose additional funding for control of invasive species.
- Preserve and reintroduce native species.

Issue: Island and Bank Erosion

- Increase public awareness of boat wake erosion and loss of habitat.
- Continue building islands.
- Make riprap more natural looking.
- Create a user-fee and direct money to the Refuge.

Issue: Water Level Management of Navigation Pools (Drawdowns)

- Accelerated active water level management to improve species diversity.
- Public input and education should remain a priority for drawdowns.
- Provide drawdown information at boat landings.
- Duplicate natural cycle of water level changes.
- Assure that drawdowns do not adversely impact native species.
- Continue research to evaluate benefits of drawdowns.
- Drawdowns seem severe, should be more carefully scheduled, moderate and strategic.
- Raise water levels as well as lower them as needed.
- Implement Environmental Pools Plans that include drawdowns.

Issue: Camping and Beach Use

- Educate public on appropriate uses of camping areas on a National Wildlife Refuge.
- Regulate camping through designated areas and permit system.
- Do not increase the number of camp sites.
- Provide higher visibility of law enforcement officers.
- Promote the Leave No Trace Program.
- Continue to develop beach management plans.
- The term “beach” implies improvements; suggest using the term “sandbars.”
- Start a user fee to pay for management and enforcement.
- Develop working relationships between user groups and law enforcement.
- Get public involved in clean up.
- Consider turtle habitat needs; close some beaches.
- Dispersing use and confining use – both should be viewed from the perspective of a “quality experience.”



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- Require personal toilets for all campers (already required in the back country of many National Parks).
- Restrict personal watercraft, camping and non-wildlife oriented recreation to main channel.
- Need better job of informing users of the nature of the Refuge.

Issue: Competitive Sport Fishing

- Eliminate or limit prize money on fishing tournaments.
- Limit the number of tournaments.
- Cooperate with DNR to regulate fishing tournaments.

Issue: Minimizing Visitor Conflicts

- Increase funds for public education of habitat values, economic values, and law enforcement.
- Implement voluntary avoidance areas, such as areas for personal watercraft.
- Create centrally located nature centers.
- Establish non-motorized areas in backwaters.
- Set up a poetry trail where people can commune with nature in a quiet setting and learn about the environment.
- Legalize open-water hunting to spread out hunters.
- Work with boating groups, local governments, and state agencies to develop boating guidelines and regulations.
- Conduct more public meetings before decisions are made.
- Promote consistency between four states in regulations.
- Hunting / Fishing / Trapping seasons overlap; enact laws to minimize conflicts.
- Earlier hunting seasons have brought on new conflicts, e.g. early goose season and campers.
- Provide buffer zone between bike trail and hunting zones.

Issue: Permanent Hunting Blinds

- Permanent blinds should stay in Refuge districts where they are preferred.
- Leave things as they are according to local tradition.
- Eliminate permanent blinds over a period of time.
- Use a daily drawing of blinds for safety.
- Do not allow proprietary rights to public lands.
- Keep permanent blinds because they space hunters out over an area, increasing the quality of hunt.
- Provide area for boat blinds.

- Conduct a “duck hunter’s clean-up day” to remove debris and repair blinds.
- Remove all hunting equipment from Refuge at end of the day.
- Establish additional managed (lottery draw) hunting areas in which permanent blinds would not be allowed.

Issue: Potter’s Marsh Blind Management Zone

- Increase fees to cover the costs of administering the hunt.
- Extend blind building to Sept. 15; the August heat is too heavy.
- Use a single drawing, must be present to win.
- Form volunteer committee to inspect blinds and administer drawings, this will free up Refuge staff time.

Issue: Public Access

- Get public and local government input on constructing access facilities (i.e., easements, fishing piers, boat launches and walk-in access).
- Make Refuge more user-friendly with signs, maps, and public outreach.
- Limit access to boat ramps.
- Negotiate foot access across railroad rights-of-way.
- Provide more access from the Savanna Army Depot.
- To be able to improve facilities, add user fees for ramps and camping.

Issue: Use of Dogs and Other Domestic Animals

- Suggested wording of regulation: Pets cannot disturb wildlife or people; must be under control at all times; pets cannot roam; pets must be physically restrained when on posted designated areas and recreational sandbars, except when engaged in authorized hunting activity.
- Work with other groups to develop regulations that allow appropriate uses that do not endanger people or wildlife.

Issue: Education – Wildlife Related

- Provide Outreach Coordinators for each Refuge District.
- Local schools are hungry for more outreach and a better river curriculum is needed.
- Train instructors about refuge resources, techniques and sites.
- Need programs that explain differences in habitat and how some land uses cause problems; help provide solutions.

Issue: Funding Inequities

- Assess all UMR funding holistically across all agencies and establish shared spending priorities based on ecologically sound and sustainable resource objectives.

Issue: Land Acquisition

- Purchase key parcels that would assist in alleviating/reducing off-Refuge problems.
- Need Refuge person dedicated to land acquisition.
- Expand boundaries to better protect watersheds, including bluffs and up the river to Mpls./St. Paul.
- Educate public about benefits of land acquisition.
- Improve efficiency of acquisition process; be capable of acting quickly to purchase tracts; be more creative using NGOs, easements, options to purchase, and purchase development rights.
- Develop long-term funding source for river protection.

Issue: Lost Mound Area (Savanna Army Depot)

- Work politically and educate public, urging them to pressure government for resolution.
- Oppose Dept. of Defense to do minimum clean up and seal area off. Army needs to do clean up.
- Concern that area needs to be open to the public

Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge

Issue: Refuge Expansion

- Protect and clean up sink holes using a multi-agency and landowner program.
- Expand and manage to include all sensitive algific slope species. There may be other things to discover in the future.
- Expand buffer zones to protect system of sinkholes.
- Enact 1993 acreage expansion proposal.
- Be aware that a 6220-acre expansion could cause concern with some hunters and landowners.
- Utilize easements when purchase is not possible.
- Continue to partner with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and TNC.

Issue: Public Use

- Motorized uses should be prohibited.
- Expand education outreach efforts.
- Develop demonstration site for education.
- Use designated areas for certain activities, such as hunting and observation.

- Add staff for outreach and education.
- Develop exhibits for interpretations.
- Don't call attention to where algific slopes are located.
- County engineers need to know about algific slopes and sinkholes in areas where roads are constructed.
- Prohibit skiing, snowboarding and quarrying.

Issue: Habitat Management

- Use best management practices to promote healthy algific slopes and species.
- Include monitoring of sites in management plans.
- Consider restoring sensitive or extirpated species in areas adjacent to or surrounding algific slopes.
- Develop comprehensive plan to control exotic species.
- Manage deer by more hunting and fencing; manage in context of the surrounding farm landscape.
- Logging (thinning) may be needed for northern monkshood.
- Manage buffers for a variety of native plants and animals.

Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge

Issue: Prairie and Oak Savanna Restoration

- Keep the native and keep removing the invasives.
- Get volunteers involved in replanting.
- Remove black locust; use for firewood.
- Do not remove the pine trees.
- Educate the public about removal of trees.
- Develop an adequate fire management plan.
- Cut only a small area at a time.
- Use a "Cat" Dozer to eliminate resprouting.

Issue: Invasive Species

- Continue current mechanical, chemical and biological control techniques.
- Train and use volunteers in control of invasives.
- Provide public outreach on dangers of invasive species.
- Establish a rough fish removal project; contract with commercial anglers.



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- Provide additional staff and funding for control of invasives.
- Conduct research of various controls.

Issue: Minimizing Human Impacts

- Encourage hunting to be more specialized for deer and waterfowl.
- Educate the public.
- Increase enforcement.
- Develop plan to minimize impacts of future increases in number of Refuge users.

Issue: Water Level Management

- Possibly add another pumping station.
- Identify financial benefits of reducing the rough fish population.
- Maintain and preserve present islands with riprap.
- Provide base level funding for drawdowns.
- Formulate a back-flooding policy for use during major floods.
- Utilize drawdowns to eliminate rough fish.

Issue: Refuge Access

- Seek funding to improve access with bridge or culverts.
- Seek funding for feasibility study to create direct bike route between Marshland and Refuge entrance.
- Consider leaving [the access road] as is.
- Management decisions should reflect primacy of wildlife and natural systems.

Issue: Community Involvement

- Use the media more.
- Send out monthly flyers.
- Have the Friends do more.

- Provide awareness to landowners/farmers that sedimentation is an issue.

Issue: Off-Refuge Impacts

- Dredge Trempealeau Bay for sedimentation relief.
- Develop an interagency plan for handling a toxic spill.
- Conduct preplanning with railroad, towing companies and highway interests.

Issue: Environmental Education

- Hire an environmental educator.
- Provide year-round visitor shelter.
- Provide more informational signs.
- Conduct outreach to schools, communities, agencies, and beyond.
- Develop environmental awareness to various user groups.

Issue: Managing the Refuge's Deer Population

- Monitor the deer population and keep it at a low rate until more is known about chronic wasting disease.
- Use handicap and senior hunt rather than open hunt to the entire public.
- Establish a balance on no deer and too many deer.

Issue: Trapping

- Maintain trapping as a management option on the Refuge.
- Educate the public on the need for a trapping program.
- Consider trapping upland bird nest predators.
- Expand program to include trapping of coyotes and raccoons.

Issue: Waterfowl Hunting

- Continue existing hunting programs for youth and hunters with disabilities.
- Do not change current closed area status; it helps hunting in surrounding areas.

Issue: Horseback Riding

- (Discussion included pros and cons, but the group ran out of time to develop potential solutions.)



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Meetings on Closed Areas Offer Opportunity for Dialogue

Two informational meetings for public awareness about Refuge Closed Areas were held this spring and early summer. The first was at Eagle Bluff Elementary School in Onalaska, Wisconsin, on March 4, 2003. The second was at the Refuge's Savanna District Office in Thomson, Illinois, on June 14, 2003. Information was provided through presentations made by Eric Nelson (Refuge Biologist/Planner), Jim Nissen (La Crosse District Manager), and Dr. Kevin Kenow (USGS Researcher, La Crosse, Wisconsin). Topics included 1) the history of closed areas, distribution of waterfowl on the Refuge and habitat concerns, 2) habitat use and human disturbance of waterfowl, and 3) bioenergetic needs of waterfowl and a computer model showing available food resources in waterfowl habitat, both existing and potential. These presentations were followed by lively question and answer sessions that were moderated by Refuge Complex Manager Don Hultman.

Background

Closed Areas are portions of the Refuge that are closed to migratory bird hunting and furbearer trapping during the duck hunting season. They are generally open to other uses, with some exceptions. The purposes of the closed areas are to provide secure resting and feeding areas for waterfowl during the fall migration and to disperse waterfowl hunting opportunities on the Refuge. The current closed area system was established in 1957-58, with all areas fully functioning as intended. Since then, closed area habitats have changed and hunting pressure has increased locally. The result is that some closed areas are not functioning as they did when established. During the planning process, the Refuge is considering whether to revise the current system in order to restore the areas to their intended purpose.

Comments and Discussions: Onalaska, Wisconsin, Meeting

- The decline in vegetation of the Weaver Bottoms closed area of Pool 5 was caused by several factors that have occurred river-wide. These include sedimentation (filling) of the backwaters, 70 years of continuous flooding since the locks and dams were installed, loss of islands, and increased wind and wave action that has dislodged plants and caused more turbidity, thus reducing the amount of light available for growth of aquatic plants.
- Tundra swan feeding on tubers of aquatic plants could possibly reduce local aquatic plant populations. A study of that concern will be started this fall.
- Waterfowl are now clumped into a few remaining Closed Areas that provide adequate food and resting area. The Refuge wants the birds spread out over the length of the area..
- If closed area boundaries are changed, they would probably remain so for more than 4 to 5 years. At this time, there are no changes proposed for any of the Closed Areas.
- Citizen comment: establish relatively smaller Closed Areas that emphasize resting habitat; not all Closed Areas need to provide food also.
- The Refuge would like to see a wider distribution of puddle duck habitat.
- Pool Slough (near New Albin, Iowa) will become a Closed Area upon completion.

- Citizen question: Should we make sanctuaries to keep boats (go-devil style boats) out? Answer: All-terrain style boats were not an issue when Closed Areas were established. They are more common now and do have an impact on feeding and resting birds.
- Even though the CCP covers 15 years, the Refuge can make changes as needed prior to the 15-year term.
- Citizen comment: Consider making a canoe-only hunting area. Set up a location where the person without the latest technology or lots of money can have a high quality hunt.
- Citizen comment: Work with the Corps of Engineers to conduct water level management.
- Citizen comment: There is a pond near Merrick State Park (Pool 5A) that is a small area but holds a very large number of ducks. This area should be closed to hunting.
- Citizen comment: Don't expand Closed Areas, perhaps make them smaller.

Citizen Comments on Closed Areas Thomson, Illinois, Meeting

- Include closed areas for waterfowl nesting and production in the spring.
- What studies have been done to support closed areas?
- Where are closed areas for fish production?
- Savanna Army Depot will be closed to hunting - this adds 5,500 acres to the closed area system.
- Rotate closed and open areas every few years.
- Consider having closed areas for other species of animals.

Citizen Comments on Other Concerns

- Potter's Marsh managed hunt is a jewel of the river; why tamper with it? There should be more areas like it.
- Remove 100 feet of wing dams from the shoreline ends to promote more flow along the shore.
- Siltation is the number one issue; work with private landowners to reduce siltation.
- Concerned that bike trail users and bass fishermen do not provide as much funding as hunters do; charge them fees.
- There is a conflict between duck hunters and bass fisherman (tournaments); maintain the 200 yard separation distance for fisherman, too.
- Siltation and power boats are a problem for fish and habitat.

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NEWS from the National Wildlife Refuge System
Upper Mississippi River
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